

**CLAIMS**

We claim:

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1. A method of providing a local user of an instant messaging system with updated status information regarding at least one remote user, comprising:

obtaining, by an awareness client application process executing on a local computer system, from an associated awareness server application process executing on a  
10 server computer system, an online status of said remote computer system user;

presenting, by said awareness client application process, a representation of said remote computer system user, wherein said representation of said remote computer system user includes an indication of said online status of said remote computer system user;

15 obtaining, by said awareness client application process on said local computer system, an updated status message associated with said remote computer system user;  
and

modifying said indication of said online status of said remote computer system user to include an indication that said updated status message associated with said remote  
20 computer system user is available.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

presenting said updated status message to a local user of said local computer system in response to a local user hovering a cursor over said representation of said remote computer system user.

5     3. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

presenting said updated status message to a local user of said local computer system in response to said local user selecting said representation of said remote computer system user.

10    4. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

presenting said updated status message to a local user of said local computer system; and

removing said indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available responsive to said presenting of said updated status message.

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5. The method of claim 1, wherein said representation of said remote computer system user is maintained by said awareness client application process on said local computer system.

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6. The method of claim 1, wherein said representation of said remote computer system user is an awareness object within a display window associated with an application

process on said local computer system other than said awareness client application process.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein said online status of said remote computer system user  
5 includes an indication of whether said remote computer system user is available for an instant messaging communication session.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising presenting said indication that said updated  
status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for a  
10 predetermined time after said obtaining said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user.

9. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

presenting an interface to said user of said local computer system, wherein said  
15 interface enables said user of said local computer system to indicate whether an indication that an updated status message associated with said user of said local computer system user is available is provided to other users.

10. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

20 presenting an interface to said user of said local computer system, wherein said interface enables said user of said local computer system to specify one or more other users with which an indication that an updated status message associated with said user of said local computer system may be presented.

11. A system of providing a local user of an instant messaging system with updated status information regarding at least one remote user, comprising:

5       means for obtaining, by an awareness client application process executing on a local computer system, from an associated awareness server application process executing on a server computer system, an online status of said remote computer system user;

      means for presenting, by said awareness client application process, a  
10   representation of said remote computer system user, wherein said representation of said remote computer system user includes an indication of said online status of said remote computer system user;

      means for obtaining, by said awareness client application process on said local computer system, an updated status message associated with said remote computer  
15   system user; and

      means for modifying said indication of said online status of said remote computer system user to include an indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available.

20   12. The system of claim 11, further comprising:

      means for presenting said updated status message to a local user of a local computer system in response to a local user hovering a cursor over said representation of said remote computer system user.

13. The system of claim 11, further comprising:

means for presenting said updated status message to a local user of said local computer system in response to said local user selecting said representation of said remote computer system user.

14. The system of claim 11, further comprising:

means for presenting said updated status message to a local user of said local computer system; and

means for removing said indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available responsive to said presenting of said updated status message.

15. The system of claim 11, wherein said representation of said remote computer system user is maintained by said awareness client application process on said local computer system.

16. The system of claim 11, wherein said representation of said remote computer system user is an awareness object within a display window associated with an application process on said local computer system other than said awareness client application process.

17. The system of claim 11, wherein said online status of said remote computer system user includes an indication of whether said remote computer system user is available for an instant messaging communication session.

5 18. The system of claim 11, further comprising presenting said indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for a predetermined time after said obtaining said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user.

10 19. The system of claim 11, further comprising:

means for presenting an interface to said user of said local computer system, wherein said interface enables said user of said local computer system to indicate whether an indication that an updated status message associated with said user of said local computer system user is available is provided to other users.

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20. The system of claim 11, further comprising:

means for presenting an interface to said user of said local computer system, wherein said interface enables said user of said local computer system to specify one or more other users with which an indication that an updated status message associated with

20 said user of said local computer system may be presented.

21. A computer program product, wherein said computer program product includes a computer readable medium, said computer readable medium having a computer program for providing a local user of an instant messaging system with updated status information regarding at least one remote user stored thereon, said computer program comprising:

5           program code for obtaining, by an awareness client application process executing on a local computer system, from an associated awareness server application process executing on a server computer system, an online status of said remote computer system user;

          program code for presenting, by said awareness client application process, a  
10 representation of said remote computer system user, wherein said representation of said remote computer system user includes an indication of said online status of said remote computer system user;

          program code for obtaining, by said awareness client application process on said local computer system, an updated status message associated with said remote computer  
15 system user; and

          program code for modifying said indication of said online status of said remote computer system user to include an indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available.

20 22. The computer program product of claim 21, said computer program further comprising:

program code for presenting said updated status message to a local user of said local computer system in response to a local user hovering a cursor over said representation of said remote computer system user.

- 5    23. The computer program product of claim 21, said computer program further comprising:

program code for presenting said updated status message to a local user of said local computer system in response to said local user selecting said representation of said remote computer system user.

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24. The computer program product of claim 21, said computer program further comprising:

presenting said updated status message to a local user of said local computer system; and

- 15    removing said indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available responsive to said presenting of said updated status message.

25. The computer program product of claim 21, wherein said representation of said  
20 remote computer system user is maintained by said awareness client application process on said local computer system.



26. The computer program product of claim 21, wherein said representation of said remote computer system user is an awareness object within a display window associated with an application process on said local computer system other than said awareness client application process.

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27. The computer program product of claim 21, wherein said online status of said remote computer system user includes an indication of whether said remote computer system user is available for an instant messaging communication session.

10 28. The computer program product of claim 21, said computer program further comprising program code for presenting said indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for a predetermined time after said obtaining said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user.

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29. The computer program product of claim 21, said computer program further comprising:

program code for presenting an interface to said user of said local computer system, wherein said interface enables said user of said local computer system to indicate  
20 whether an indication that an updated status message associated with said user of said local computer system user is available is provided to other users.

30. The computer program product of claim 21, said computer program further comprising:

program code for presenting an interface to said user of said local computer system, wherein said interface enables said user of said local computer system to specify  
5 one or more other users with which an indication that an updated status message associated with said user of said local computer system may be presented.

31. A system for providing a local user of an instant messaging system with updated status information regarding at least one remote user, comprising:

10 program code, stored in a computer readable memory communicably coupled to at least one processor on a client computer system for obtaining, by an awareness client application process executing on said client computer system, from an associated awareness server application process executing on a server computer system, an online status of said remote computer system user;

15 program code, stored in said computer readable memory, for presenting, by said awareness client application process, a representation of said remote computer system user, wherein said representation of said remote computer system user includes an indication of said online status of said remote computer system user;

program code, stored in said computer readable memory, for obtaining, by said  
20 awareness client application process on said local computer system, an updated status message associated with said remote computer system user; and

program code, stored in said computer readable memory, for modifying said indication of said online status of said remote computer system user to include an

indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available.

32. A computer data signal embodied in a carrier wave, said computer data signal  
5 including at least one computer program for providing a local user of an instant messaging system with updated status information regarding at least one remote user, said computer program comprising:

program code for obtaining, by an awareness client application process executing on a local computer system, from an associated awareness server application process  
10 executing on a server computer system, an online status of said remote computer system user;

program code for presenting, by said awareness client application process, a representation of said remote computer system user, wherein said representation of said remote computer system user includes an indication of said online status of said remote  
15 computer system user;

program code for obtaining, by said awareness client application process on said local computer system, an updated status message associated with said remote computer system user; and

program code for modifying said indication of said online status of said remote  
20 computer system user to include an indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available.